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## REAGAN CRITICIZES THE LATIN DEBATE

Contends It Has 'Strayed Too  
Far From Reality' and Says  
Need for Aid Is Urgent

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 17 — President Reagan said today that the debate on Central America had "strayed too far from reality" and that more United States military aid to the area was urgently required.

The "strategic balance of the world" is at stake, Mr. Reagan said in remarks to a group of prominent Hispanic Americans at the White House.

"Economic assistance, as much as some people on Capitol Hill would like to think otherwise, will not overcome the military threat," the President said.

In what appeared to be an attempt to renew pressure on the House to approve his requests for military aid for El Salvador and for Nicaraguan insurgents, the President added, "If Central America is lost, then our own borders will be threatened."

"Today," he said, "a faraway totalitarian power is committing enormous resources to change the strategic balance of the world by turning Central America into a string of anti-American, Soviet-styled dictatorships."

The President spent part of the day meeting with Foreign Minister Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor of Mexico, who has said Mr. Reagan's Nicaragua policy violates international law. Last Friday in Mexico City, the Foreign Minister called for an end to all armed intervention in Nicaragua. A senior Administration official said the meeting with Mr. Reagan was cordial, with no discord.

### 'Friends Will Lose Freedom'

In the President's remarks at a White House luncheon meeting of the National Hispanic Leadership Conference, an event separate from the visit of Mexican officials, Mr. Reagan said a Communist-inspired assault was aimed at "all of America."

"If we do not have the courage and the political will to help them counter this power play, our friends will lose their freedom," he said, "and American security from pole to pole will be threatened."

Apparently speaking of resistance in Congress to his policy and his aid requests, Mr. Reagan said: "If we mean to oppose Communist aggression, then we cannot throw every possible roadblock in the way of helping our peace-loving friends defend themselves. We cannot afford the consequences of passively watching guerrillas force Communist dictatorships down the throats of the people of Central America."

The House declined to act last week on the President's requests, passed by the Republican-controlled Senate, for more military aid for El Salvador and for the guerrillas fighting to undermine the Nicaraguan Government after the Congressional outcry over reports that the United States was supervising the mining of Nicaraguan waters. As a result, Mr. Reagan decided to use emergency funds of up to \$32 million for El Salvador and leave his Nicaraguan request unmet for now with Congress in recess.

### 'Still Time to Defend Freedom'

White House officials said the President's remarks today were part of his campaign for the requested \$62 million for El Salvador and \$21 million for Nicaraguan insurgents.

"There's still time to defend freedom," Mr. Reagan told the Hispanic group. "But to do so we can't stand as a house divided against itself. We must recognize our common values. We must take a no-nonsense approach to protecting our vital interests."

The President appeared at one point to relate the dispute on Central America to his recent calls for less "second-guessing" in Congress, which he contends can undermine the nation's foreign policy.

"We face one of the major challenges

for democracy in our time," the President told the Hispanic group. "Debate on this issue has strayed too far from reality."

The meeting with Hispanic Americans gave the President a forum both for pressing the Democratic-controlled House to act on his requests and for campaigning for Hispanic support in his re-election bid. The President made a point of praising the many Hispanic Americans who have won medals for heroism in United States military service.

"Their valor kept this country free," the President declared, speaking of the "heavy burden" for freedom that "we Americans carry."